

Message Text

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ACTION OES-04

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 FEA-01 ACDA-05 CIAE-00 INR-07

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TAGS: TGEW, PINT, JA

SUBJ: RADIOACTIVE LEAKAGE AT ATOMIC POWER PLANT

REF: FUKUOKA'S A-04 OF JANUARY 31, 1975

SUMMARY: THE LEAKAGE OF EXCESS RADIOACTIVITY AT THE GENKAI NUMBER ONE
NUCLEAR ATOMIC POWER PLANT NEAR KARATSU HAS BEEN ONE OF THE TOP STORI
ES

IN THE LOCAL PRESS, PARTICULARLY THE NISHI NIHON SHIMBUN, SINCE THE
STORY BROKE JUNE 12. ALTHOUGH THE LEAKAGE IS MINISCULE COMPARED WITH
THE STANDARDS THAT HAVE BEEN SET AND THE COMPANY SAYS IT CAN REPAIR T
HE

DAMAGE AND ENSURE THAT IT DOES NOT HAPPEN AGAIN, THE TIMING FOR THE
ACCIDENT COULD HARDLY BE WORSE. FOR EXAMPLE, COMMERCIAL OPERATION OF
THE PLANT WILL BE DELAYED AT GREAT EXPENSE TO KYSHU ELECTRIC. MORE

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IMPORTANTLY, HOWEVER, IS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE ACCIDENT.
ALONG WITH THE MUSTU TROUBLES, PREVIOUS PROBLEMS WITH ATOMIC GENERATI
NG

PLANTS IN JAPAN, AND INEPT HANDLING OF THE ACCIDENT BY KYUSHU
ELECTRIC, OPPOSITION TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF MORE PLANTS IN KYUSHU
SEEMS CERTAIN TO GROW. END SUMMARY.

ON JUNE 12, NEWSPAPERS HEADLINED A RADIOACTIVITY LEAKAGE AT

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KYUSHU ELECTRIC'S (KYUDEN) GENKAI ATOMIC POWER PLANT NEAR KARATSU,

SAGA PREFECTURE. ALTHOUGH THE LEAKAGE HAD ACTUALLY OCCURRED TWO DAYS BEFORE AND KYUDEN OFFICIALS HAD PROMPTLY INFORMED SAGA PREFECTURE, KARATSU CITY, AND THE MITI OFFICE CN FUKUOKA, THE PUBLIC FIRST HEARD OF THE LEAK THROUGH MEDIA ACCOUNTS. THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF KYUDEN EXPLAINED RATHER UNCONVINCINGLY THAT THE REASON FOR DELAY WAS THAT THE AMOUNT OF RADIOACTIVITY INVOLVED WAS VERY SMALL (33 MILICURIES) AND HAD OCCURRED DURING A TEST RUN WHICH HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO UNCOVER DEFECTS. HE ENDED BY CALLING FOR PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

AS REF A POINTED OUT, GENKAI NUMBER ONE BECAME, IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR, THE FIRST ATOMIC GENERATOR IN KYUSHU TO REACH THE CRITICAL STAGE. BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY, IT HAD GENERATED ABOUT 50 THOUSAND KILOWATTS, AND FULL OPERATION OF 550,000 KILOWATTS WAS TO BEGIN

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JULY 1. THIS OPERATION WILL BE DELAYED, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CERTAIN FOR HOW LONG.

THE CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT APPEARS TO BE A FAULT IN ONE OF 3,888 PIPES IN A HEAT EXCHANGER AND THE PIPE WILL BE TAKEN TO TOKYO FOR TESTS. THE LEAK IS VERY SIMILAR TO THAT OF KANSAI ELECTRIC'S MIHAMA NUMBER 2 PLANT IN FUKUI, ACCORDING TO NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS. OPPOSITION ORGANIZATION SAY THAT WHILE MIHAMA'S ACCIDENT TOOK PLACE AFTER ONE YEAR OF OPERATION, GENKAI'S ACCIDENT OCCURRED DURING A TEST RUN AND CLAIM THAT THE LEAK INDICATES POOR ENGINEERING. COMMENT: THE TIMING FOR THE ACCIDENT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN WORSE FOR KYUDEN. THE COST OF EACH MONTH'S DELAY IN STARTING COMMERCIAL OPERATION WILL BE ABOUT ONE BILLION YEN; IN ADDITION, THE PLANT HAD BEEN RELIED UPON TO PROVIDE SOME SLACK FOR THIS SUMMER'S SURGE IN ELECTRIC CONSUMPTION, WHICH SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE NOW. THOSE WHO HAD SUPPORTED THE PLANT, SUCH AS SAGA PREFECTURE'S GOVERNOR, WERE PLACED IN AN EMBARRASSING POSITION, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF KYUDEN'S DELAYED ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ACCIDENT. DR. ARTHUR TAMPLIN SPOKE AT SENDAI, KAGOSHIMA PREFECTURE, JUNE 15, AND SAID THAT THE PROPOSED ATOMIC PLANT SCHEDULED TO BE BUILT IN SENDAI WOULD BE EVEN MORE PRONE TO ACCIDENTS BECAUSE OF ITS SIZE, 890,000 KW. THE

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CONSTRUCTION OF BOTH SENDAI AND GENKAI NUMBER TWO SEEMS CERTAIN TO BE DELAYED, AND THIS WILL PUT A REAL CRIMP IN KYUDEN'S PLANS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTRIC GENERATING CAPACITY IN WESTERN JAPAN. END COMMENT.

RICHARDSON

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